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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 003034

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SALVADORAN FOMIN DEBRIEFS AMBASSADOR ON SUMMIT

Classified By: Ambassador H. Douglas Barclay. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) On November 7, Salvadoran Foreign Minister Francisco Lainez (protect) briefed the Ambassador on events surrounding the Mar del Plata summit. According to Lainez, the Argentine government was prejudiced against the U.S. from the outset, and proof positive was that the GOA allowed Hugo Chavez access to a stadium and the logistical arrangements to hold Chavez' so-called "summit of the people." Lainez further opined that the GOA was passive in allowing the riots which occurred during the summit. Lainez was complementary of Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, and added that both Martin and Mexican President Fox "did a very good job." On Fox, Lainez said that he did a very good job in explaining the benefits of NAFTA for the Mexican economy, especially on its highly positive impact on economic growth. On Lula, Lainez said that, while the Brazilian president did not support the FTAA, at least Lula supported free trade in his public pronouncements. Lainez added that Chavez was totally disruptive, but thought that, if oil prices go down, Chavez will have political problems at home.

12. (C) Lainez stated that, prior to the Saca meeting with President Bush, Saca had become very upset about the seating arrangement for the heads of state dinner. Lainez said that Saca had assumed that, according to protocol, he (Saca) would be sitting next to President Bush at the dinner. Instead, upon arrival Saca found that a former (unnamed) Argentine president and the present Argentine vice-president were sitting between Saca and the President. Lainez said that he met with Saca after the dinner, that he had never seen Saca so mad, and that Saca became even more insistent that Lainez get a bilateral with the President. Lainez felt relieved that Saca was granted a bilateral with the President, because Saca had put tremendous pressure on Lainez. Regarding the Bush-Saca bilateral, Lainez said that Saca raised El Salvador's candidacy to the Millennium Challenge Account, asserted GOES support for accelerated deportations of Salvadoran illegals, and advocated for a new TPS for El Salvador.

13. (C) Saca invited the President to El Salvador in January to announce the start of CAFTA-DR. Lainez offered that Saca was privately concerned about the possibility of Guatemala receiving a new TPS and El Salvador not getting one, and that Saca wanted the President in January, not because of CAFTA, but for the symbolic value of such a visit before the March 2006 national elections. Lainez said that the President told Saca that he (the President) would have a problem visiting El Salvador for a second time, not having visited any of the other Central American countries even once. Lainez opined that Saca feels he has a good rapport with the President, but that Saca still does not feel totally comfortable in the relationship. Lainez said Saca feels he is out on the limb supporting USG policies while most of his Latin American neighbors are not.

14. (C) Comment: Lainez is not a Saca insider, has little access to the president, and had an uphill battle in his bid for the FoMin position. As such, he feels he is on tenuous ground and has told Embassy interlocutors who are very close to Lainez that Saca insiders like Governance Minister Figueroa and Private Secretary to the Presidency Charlaix are, in essence, out to get him. It was clear that Lainez was under tremendous pressure from Saca to make the presidential bilat happen.

Barclay